

albumreview

Hilotrons

Happymatic  
Kelp Records

GARY ALLEN  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Like a hipster’s wet dream, the third album from the Ottawa-based Hilotrons, *Happymatic*, is a collection of eclectically influenced tracks that border on schizophrenic. One thing, however, stands in the way of the album’s domination of all things hip: *Happymatic* is very listenable pop music, which could prove either its greatest asset or biggest liability.

According to their label’s website, “Hilotrons have been pumping up the jam since 2001,” but have largely focused on being one of Ottawa’s best live bands, and have thus only released two albums prior to *Happymatic*. It’s not hard to understand why Hilotrons are a popular live act: they’re one of few bands that manage to translate some of the live excitement onto their album.

*Happymatic* is an energetic and

fun frolic into the world of indie-pop music, and it’s hard to describe the album without using the pure sensual reaction: it’s happy, affecting, involving, and actually manages to put a smile on your face and include you in the merriment.

The songs are extremely varied but consistently solid: the opener, “Lost in Yichang,” is Strokes-lite, and “Feet First” sounds like a Barry Gray theme song to a long lost *Thunderbirds* pilot. The album’s highlights are “Lovesuit,” a tick-tock singalong, and “Emergency Street,” a ska-influenced romp with driving guitars and plenty of “na-nas” to sing along with.

Overall, *Happymatic* is a joy to listen to and manages to capture the energy and excitement of both the material and the band. You can’t ask for more than that.



albumreview

The Feminists

Can’t Scream Loud Enough  
Space Dog

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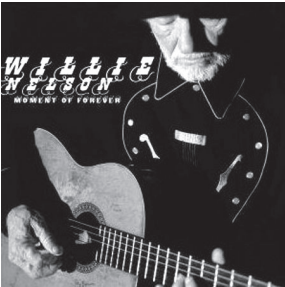
*Can’t Scream Loud Enough* is an album that comes at you full of connotations the second you hear the title and band name. These Vancouver-based Feminists seem to make it their business to throw out connotations along with the garbage. Completely devoid of the screamings of angry feminists, *Can’t Scream Loud Enough* is just out to have a little fun.

Dominated by upbeat tracks and playful lyrics, The Feminists’ third album follows their self-proclaimed path of “21st century rock band” by stealing elements from musical history and blending them with current favourites. Classic rock elements and synthesizer-accented songs reign supreme throughout. Percussion also plays a big role in their sound:

the clear and melodic beats that last the entire album inflict the listener with an uncontrollable need to bounce along in time. If *Can’t Scream Loud Enough* doesn’t make you want to move, then you’re probably a paraplegic.

As with most albums, The Feminists’ music does have its drawbacks. While frontman Keith Grief (yes, The Feminists are fronted by a dude) has a great head for lyrics, he doesn’t have a voice to match his wordplay.

His vocals won’t grate on you in the first couple tracks, but by the end of the album, you may want to duct tape his mouth shut: some singer/songwriters are just meant to give it up and start careers as hermit poets who never read their work out loud.



albumreview

Willie Nelson

A Moment of Forever  
Lost Highway

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Willie Nelson’s *A Moment of Forever* is a creative approach to mixing Nelson’s traditional guitar-pickin’ sound with his unique voice and different musical interpretations of classics like Kris Kristofferson’s “Moment of Forever,” as well as contemporary country hits like Big Kenny’s “The Bob Song.”

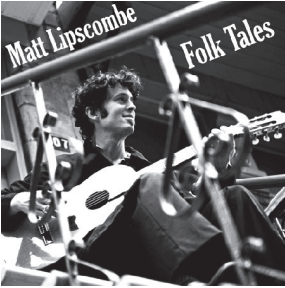
After 2004’s *Outlaws and Angels*—which featured artists like Toby Keith and Kid Rock stepping in to back Nelson up—he’s again successful at bringing the past and

present together, in part due to choosing Kenny Chesney and Buddy Cannon as producers. Their influence is felt throughout the entire album, and though it takes a few listens to appreciate the rather funky adoption of Bob Dylan’s “Gotta Serve Somebody,” Nelson’s own “You Don’t Think I’m Funny Anymore” makes the album comfortable enough for those expecting a certain sound from a Nelson album. On *A Moment of Forever*, this song is most reminiscent of his work in the

past, like the *Storytellers* series with Johnny Cash in the ’90s or legendary Nelson songs like “Good Hearted Woman.”

Though the album contains a varied span of songs—unsurprising, given Nelson’s age—there’s a common theme of time throughout: all the songs more or less focus on a particular moment or the passing thereof, and consequently, listening through *A Moment of Forever* is like a journey into the past led by the traditional Nelson sound and lyrics. But it also looks into the future by mixing the Nelson sound with funkier, musical interpretations.

“Always Now” most effectively accomplishes this task with its Hawaiian influence, and lines like “It’s always now / And nothing ever goes away,” are the perfect reminder that Nelson’s music is here to stay.



albumreview

Matt Lipscombe

Folk Tales  
Independent

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*Folk Tales* is the first English release of Matt Lipscombe, who started a solo project after the dissolution of his former ska-punk band, Me Mom and Morgentaler. However, *Folk Tales* couldn’t be more different than ska-punk: turn on Matt Lipscombe’s album, and you’re immediately transported to an intimate performance like you’d find in a small café.

His soothing voice is combined with a variety of guest artists on each

track, including Polaris Prize winner Patrick Watson on piano, former bandmate Sid Zanforlin on drums, and Becky Foon on cello.

That dream team of talented musicians—and a few more friends—gives *Folk Tales* some fantastic highs: Vivian Doan and a few others provide a beautiful supporting female harmony on “Strange Music,” “Heroes and Promises,” and throughout the album. The collaborations give the album an extended-family-reunion

feel that adds to the variety of each track. That said, Lipscombe stays close to the folk genre throughout *Folk Tales*, and though the recordings are hardly perfect—each track was recorded at cafés or in his home—their little flaws only adds to the intimacy of the album.

Patrick Watson’s eerie piano adds depth throughout *Folk Tales* and even plants an Elton John feel in “Very Big Fortress.” If a lowpoint had to be chosen, “Bramble and Thistle” would be it, given the song’s relative simplicity when compared to an album of amazing lyrics and sounds. “Faith” is another particularly amazing display of Matt Lipscombe’s skill that’s both original and catchy.

Overall, *Folk Tales* illustrates Matt Lipscombe’s ability to provide an album full of unique, folksy tracks with fun rhythms and clever lyrics.

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